

What does Jesus promise to those who abide in him? **Answers to their prayers.**

What does Jesus want us to have? **Much joy.**
How much does he tell us to love one another?
As much as he loves us.

What does Jesus call us? **His friends.**

Who has chosen us? **Jesus.**

What did he choose us for? **To bear fruit for him.**

What is the best and noblest kind of work?
Work for Jesus.

Words With Little People.

Jesus is the great Vine. Children are the little branches. If a branch, big or little, is cut off, it withers and dies. You never saw the dead branch of a tree that could bear fruit.

Children who "abide in Christ" love him, obey him, work for him, are little fruit-bearers.

Whisper Motto.

"Abide in me."

General Statement.

It was about midnight, between Thursday and Friday of Passion Week (perhaps April 5 and 6, A. D. 30), when the Saviour and his eleven disciples left the supper-room on Mount Zion and walked through the deserted streets toward the Kidron valley. A nameless sorrow filled the disciples' hearts, for their Master had spoken as never before of his departure; but they could not understand him. As they passed through the city gate, and walked down the valley under the light of the full moon, many vineyards rose before them along the terraced slope. These may have suggested the illustration with which our lesson opens. Our Lord tells his disciples that the relation borne by the vine to the branches he bears to them. The branch is valuable only as it bears grapes; and so each disciple, receiving life from his Saviour, is required to renew that life in others, and bring forth abundant fruit. When the sharp edge of the pruning-knife is felt it is only that the clusters may be larger. As the branches are one in sap and essence, and have a unity in their common stock, so all who are in Christ are members one of another, and should hold each other in mutual love. As friends in a common cause we are friends of a common Master, and sent forth to bear his message to the world.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. I am the true vine. The vine was the emblem of the Jewish Church, as shown both in the prophetic books and by ancient coins, on which Judea is represented by a cluster of grapes. Its rapid growth, its abundant fruitfulness, are points in the comparison. Here Christ proclaims that the true Church, containing life and growth and sweetness for the world, is in him. **My Father is the husbandman.** (1) *If we, as the branches, are under our Father's care, we need have no fear.* Not the Church, but Christ, is the vine. (2) *We have spiritual life, not by our union with the Church, but by our union with Christ.*

2. Every branch. The branches are individual Christians. **Fruit** borne for God is of two kinds: in ourselves, shown by godliness and rectitude of character; in others, shown by our influence to win souls to Christ. One kind may be compared to the delightful flavor of the grape, the other to the productive seed. (3) *As the vine, so the Christian is of value only as he bears fruit.* **He taketh away.** The Christian who fails to produce fruit of character and influence imperceptibly loses his holy vitality. He may not know it, others may not know it, but he becomes a dead branch, only formally united to the vine. **He purgeth it.** Better, he prunes, trims, and trains it, removing all superfluous shoots, that its strength may be concentrated on fruit-bearing. The trials of life are God's pruning-knife. **That it may bring forth more fruit.** (4) *The most useful Christians are often those who have passed through the deepest experience of trouble.* "Fruitfulness in

the life develops consciousness of Christ's indwelling, and the consciousness of Christ's indwelling in the soul develops Christian fruitfulness in the life. See 2 Pet. 1, 5, 6."—*Abbott.*

3. Now ye are clean. "Clean" in the original is an inflection of the same word as that in the previous verse translated "purgeth." Better, "on account of the word." Christ's teaching had instructed, inspired, and wrought newness of life in them.

4, 5. Abide in me, and I in you. This is not "a command and a promise," but two commands; not, if you abide in me I will abide in you, but (1) abide in me, (2) keep me in you. **The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.** Cut off a twig from the vine, and it dies; separate a Christian from Christ, and he becomes lifeless. (5) *Union with Christ is the secret of spiritual prosperity.* **Bringeth forth much fruit.** To be a branch is not enough, we must seek to be fruitful branches. **Without me. Apart from me. Ye can do nothing.** "God can do without man, but man cannot do without God."—*Clarke.*

6. If a man abide not in me. As when a Christian seeks his pleasure not in Christ, but in the world, and lives for earthly, not heavenly, aims. **He is cast forth.** The Greek verb is in a past tense; he has severed himself from Christ; he is already "cast forth." **Men gather them.** The word "men" is not in the original text, and the Revised Version reads, "They gather them," meaning God's visible agents.